

A Pack of Lies

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The platform was crowded with students bustling about. Remus Lupin felt very alone as he pushed his trolley in between clusters of older students greeting their friends with shouts of laughter and excited exchanges about their holidays. Others were embracing their parents before boarding the train. He looked about dazedly. Perhaps this was just a mistake. Perhaps he should never have come. What reason did he have to suppose that people would be any nicer, that things would be any better, at Hogwarts?

Well, he was here now, they had offered him a place; he might as well get on with it. Was he supposed to sign in somewhere, or just get on the train? After walking the length of the platform, he found nowhere to sign in, so he wandered back down the train until he found a compartment that wasn't too crowded.

A gang of students already in their Hogwarts robes pushed past him as he struggled with his heavy, battered old trunk. It was loaded with his school books and robes, and he could scarcely lift it. He heaved it onto the train, and suddenly felt it become much lighter.

'Want a hand there?' Two boys had caught hold of the other end of the trunk.

'Thanks.' He looked at the boy who had spoken in great relief. He was a bit shorter than Remus, and his black hair was tousled and wild.

'On your own, are you?' asked the other boy, the taller of the two.

Remus nodded, and the first boy said, 'Why don't you come sit with us, then? Are you new as well?'

'Yes, I am.' They brought the trunk into a compartment already filled with their own possessions.

'Sorry. I'm James Potter, and this is Sirius Black.'

'I'm Remus Lupin.' He felt much better. Now he at least had found someone else who was new, someone to talk to. Ah, but they wouldn't talk to you if they knew_, said an unpleasant voice in his head. _Then I'll take care they don't find out_, he answered himself firmly.

'I said, are you from around here?' Sirius Black was looking at him oddly.

'Sorry, I was miles away. No, I live in Dorset. I had to get the train up here at four in the morning. What about you?'

'We both live in London, back of Diagon Alley,' said James. 'Are you â€œ are you from a wizarding family?'

'Yes, both my parents are wizards. We live in the wizarding district outside of Poole, it's in the middle of nowhere really.'

'My mum's a Muggle, my dad's a wizard,' said Sirius. 'James and I went to the same primary school, and I found out I was a wizard ages ago.'

They talked about their families. Sirius had a younger brother who wasn't a wizard, and James was an only child. Neither of them knew much more about Hogwarts than he did, though James' parents had told him some things.

'My parents were both in Gryffindor,' he said. 'And they say it often runs in families. I hope I am, too. Dad will be a bit disappointed if I'm not, I know.'

The train gave a hoot and began to move with a jolt. Both James and Sirius rushed to the window, and waved wildly to their respective families. Remus looked at the platform full of other people's parents, and felt miserable again. Oh, it wasn't that his parents didn't care about him, but with his youngest sister ill, they couldn't come. And Remus had withdrawn into himself, that last year after the primary school expelled him and he had spent most of his time studying silently at home.

The train gathered pace and the platform was left behind. Dusty houses and graffiti-covered walls whisked past the window. 'Hogwarts, here we come,' said Sirius with a cackle of wicked laughter.

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'Mummy's boy!'

'Get him!'

Distant shouts echoed down the corridor of the train. James and Sirius looked up alertly. Then a small, red-faced boy came pelting down the train, looked wildly over his shoulder. Sirius pushed open the door of their compartment. 'In here!' he called with an excited grin at James.

The boy flung himself into the compartment, nearly knocking Sirius over.

'Hey, take it easy,' said James. Then the pursuing students appeared outside the door. They were wearing their Hogwarts robes, and were all much older than the boy.

'Hiding, are you? Come out!'

The boy clutched at Remus' robes desperately. Moving as one, James and Sirius stood up.

'Clear off, you lot,' said James sharply. 'Let him alone.'

'Going to make me, are you?' jeered the leader. Sirius pulled out his wand furiously.

'Hey, look at the little first year, he's going to do some magic,' said a smaller boy standing behind the leader. 'Know how to use that wand of yours, do you?'

A shower of sparks flew out of Sirius' wand. For a second, the gang hesitated, but when it became clear that nothing more than sparks was going to appear, they pushed into the compartment. Automatically, Remus ducked his head as the boys came nearer, but they ignored him. Instead, while James and Sirius ineffectually grappled with them, they grabbed hold of the boy, who was still clinging to him. Something snapped within Remus, and he reached for his wand.

He had a moment of blind panic as all eyes turned to him, but then he growled, 'Aspiratus!' There was a flash of green light, and the gang of boys were doubled up, gasping for breath.

'Now get out!'

Shooting uncertain glances at the impotently furious face of their leader, they stumbled from the compartment.

'What â€“ how did you do that?' asked James when he got over his surprise.

Remus found he was shaking. 'It â€“ it's a Breathlessness Charm. It'll wear off in about twenty minutes or so. I read about it in some book somewhere.' He gently detached the red-faced boy's hands from his robes and sat down again. Sirius' nose was streaming blood, and he was pinching it and sitting down, his face still wearing a scowl.

'Who are you?' James asked the boy, who was looking up nervously.

'I â€“ I'm Peter Pettigrew.'

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'Ah, Mr Lupin.' Professor McGonagall stopped him as they were leaving the Great Hall after the Sorting and the feast. James, Sirius and Peter looked up at her worriedly. 'I need a word with Mr Lupin here. You three go off to the dormitory.' Remus was thinking about the episode on the train. Now he was in trouble for sure.

When they were out of earshot, she said, 'Professor Dumbledore has asked that you come up to his office. I'll show you up. He's going to explain the â€“ er, arrangements that we've made for you.' Remus felt relieved as she led him through a bewildering maze of passages, upwards and upwards. At last she knocked on a door.

'Come in!'

Professor McGonagall went through the door, Remus trailing behind her. 'Albus, this is Remus Lupin.'

'Brilliant, sit down, won't you? Have a Chocolate Frog.' Uncertainly, Remus took one. As he unwrapped it, Professor Dumbledore said, 'Minerva, we'll only be a few moments, and then it would probably be better if you brought Mr Lupin here back to the Gryffindor tower, or he'll never find it.'

Professor McGonagall nodded and went out.

'Well, then, Remus, and how are you settling in? Is everything all right?'

'Yes, sir.' Remus took a good look at the most famous wizard in England. He was smiling jovially at Remus, and his eyes were twinkling.

'Good, good. Now, to business. We have made some very careful arrangements for you to make sure that everyone's safe. On the evening of the full moon, you'll go along to the Infirmary, and Madam Pomfrey will take you down and show you where you can go. She'll explain all the details â€“ she knows them far better than I do. We've prepared a very safe place for you to transform. I don't know whether you're going to tell your friends, but I would discourage you from proclaiming it to the world, as there might be some complaints.'

'I wasn't going to tell anyone,' said Remus quickly. 'I don't think it would be a good idea.'

'Well, you must do as you see fit. All the staff are aware of it, and will not demand explanations for your absence. I hope it all works well for you.'

'Thank you, sir.'

Professor McGonagall led him back to the Gryffindor common room. As they went through the castle, Remus wondered how anyone could ever find their way around. There should be a map, he thought to himself.

~

Long after the others were sleeping, Remus lay awake in the Gryffindor dormitory. He could hear Sirius snoring noisily, and Peter was tossing from side to side in some dream. It seemed incredible. Here he was, and he was in Gryffindor, and he had three friends and a reputation for being brave and good at magic before he had been here a full day. And the moon was new right now, so he had two weeks of freedom.

He was a little surprised that Peter was in Gryffindor. The Sorting Hat had said it was for 'the brave of heart,' and Peter had scarcely seemed that. But presumably the Sorting Hat knew what it was doing. And he was hardly in a position to argue. Before he put it on his head, he was certain he would be sent to Slytherin. After all, what would Gryffindor want with a werewolf? But here he was.

Now the challenge was to stay here.

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The Infirmary was very quiet after the rowdy Gryffindor tower, which pleased Remus because his head was beginning to ache. He had told James he was feeling ill, which was true enough, and went alone to the Infirmary as the sky was darkening.

'Ah, Remus,' said Madam Pomfrey with a professional smile. 'I take it the arrangements have been explained to you?' Not trusting himself to speak, Remus nodded.

'Good. If you'll come with me, thenâ€¢' She took him from the Infirmary and down a back passage to one of the many doors of the castle. She didn't seem to feel either the fear or revulsion he had grown to expect from those who knew; instead she was professional and cool.

A huge tree with wildly flailing branches stood at the edge of the long lawn. Remus looked at it in alarm. 'Is that a Whomping Willow?'

'Yes. Now, I'll make it stop for a moment, and you'll see a tunnel in the roots, round the other side. Go down there, and you'll find a room at the other end. The tree will stop you coming out. I'll meet you here at dawn.' She picked up a long pole and poked around at the base of the trunk for a moment. Remus couldn't quite make out what she was doing, but suddenly the tree was motionless.

'Go, quickly,' she said. Remus bent under the branches and found the tunnel. Carefully, he slithered in. It was muddy and smelt of rotting leaves and earth. The roof was very low, and he could only walk at a crouch.

The branches began to wave again, creaking noisily. Faintly, he heard Madam Pomfrey call out, 'Good luck!'

Heartened by these unexpected words, he went slowly through the tunnel. Halfway through, he felt the tell-tale signs that the moon was rising, and he walked faster.

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'Did you hear that?'

In Hogsmeade, Mrs Lovage was pouring a cup of tea for her husband, but her head was cocked on one side.

'What, dear?' replied Mr Lovage, turning the pages of the newspaper and paying little attention to his wife.

'That.' He dropped the newspaper in his shock. An agonised scream split open the night.

'Good God! What is it?'

'I don't know.'

The scream came again, full of pain and torment. Then there was a blood-chilling howl.

Through the night, it was repeated again and again, and the residents of Hogsmeade slept badly.

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'Are you feeling better?' During lunch break, Remus came into the Gryffindor common room, his eyes dark-shadowed.

'Yes, I'm all right.' He sat down on the sofa beside James. 'Kind of tired.'

'I tried to go and see you, before breakfast, but Madam Pomfrey said you were asleep,' said Sirius. 'What was the matter?'

'Oh, I just felt sick. I had a headache and stuff.' The lie fell easily from his lips, and he hated himself for it. But what choice did he have?

'You missed Mirth Mixtures in Potions,' said Peter. 'D'you want to look at my notes?'

'That'd be great.' Remus half-listened to Peter as he rambled on about the lesson they'd had.

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'Hey, Potter! What's happened to that friend of yours? Been expelled, has he?' Severus Snape was standing with the other first years outside the Transfiguration classroom.

'You wish,' retorted Sirius, as Peter said, 'He's gone to see his mother; she's ill.'

'Oh, his mummy's ill. Bet you wish you were with your mummy, Pettigrew.'

Peter turned bright red, and James and Sirius made threatening noises.

'Quiet!' said Professor McGonagall. 'Come in and sit down.'

The Transfiguration lesson began, and Snape had no further opportunity to speak to the Gryffindors.

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In their dormitory, Sirius and James were working through a mammoth stack of homework. Suddenly Sirius put down his quill with a scowl.

'This is hopeless. I have no idea what Professor Hale wants us to do. Why is Remus never here when you need him? He's good at Defence Against the Dark Arts.'

'He's ill â€“ he told me he was going to the Infirmary at the end of Charms. He looked pretty miserable, too.'

'He's always ill. It's ridiculous. I mean, I know it's his business and everything, but he seems to spend half his life in the Infirmary, or away somewhere. What d'you think is the matter with him?'

'I don't really know.' James turned the page of his book.

'He was ill a few weeks ago, and then right after half term, and then before that he had to go back home to see his mother because she was ill, and then he was ill in February, and in January â€“ it's getting silly.' Sirius snorted. 'And all through the autumn term as well.'

James looked up again with a curious expression on his face.

'Oh â€“ I don't know â€“ well, throw me that calendar, will you?'

Sirius pulled the calendar off the wall above Peter's desk, and tossed it to James, who flipped through it, a mixture of expressions crossing his face.

'What is it?'

'I'm not sure â€“ hang on a moment â€“ yes â€“.'

James dropped the calendar on the desk and stared into space for a while, counting on his fingers.

'What is it?' Sirius came over and looked at the calendar as well. 'Have we got a test tomorrow or something?'

'No â€“' He picked up the Defence Against the Dark Arts textbook and looked something up in the index. As Sirius stared at him, he read a few pages avidly, and then read them again.

'James, stop it. What on earth are you doing?'

He put down the textbook with a thud and began to pace around the room, looking extremely worried.

'Well?'

James hesitated. Finally he said, 'Sirius, I think â€“ I think he's a werewolf.'

'WHAT?' Sirius sprang to his feet. 'That's ridiculous!'

'Look at the calendar â€“ every time he's been ill, it's the full moon. Why else would he be away so often? And in the textbook it says that werewolves look ill and tired right after they've transformed, and Remus certainly does come back from the Infirmary looking worse than when he went.'

'But â€“ but he can't_. He can't be a werewolf.' Sirius sounded as though he were trying to convince himself. 'The school would never have admitted him. Oh, hell and furies, what are we going to do_?'

James had no answer to that, and for a while both were silent. Sirius stared morosely out the window at the overcast sky and the grey-green hills, and James looked at the floor.

'We'll have to ask him about it,' said James at last. 'And we should keep it a secret until then. I suppose we should tell Peter, though.' Sirius nodded agreement.

The door swung open. 'Hey, you guys, you should come and see this! One of the third years has a â€“' Peter broke off when he saw their faces. 'Is something wrong?'

James and Sirius looked at each other.

'Where's Remus?'

Sirius gave a slightly unnatural laugh.

'Shut up, Sirius,' said James. 'Peter, we'd better tell you. You know Remus is always ill?' Peter nodded uncertainly. 'Well, it's always at the full moon.' Obscurely, he felt that if he didn't say it aloud, it would make it less likely to be true.

'What about it? I don't see what you're getting at.'

Sirius rolled his eyes. 'Look, Peter, we think Remus is a â€“ a werewolf.'

Peter stared at him. 'You're pulling my leg,' he protested weakly. 'I don't believe you. He's making it up, isn't he, James?'

'No. There isn't any other explanation,' said James, his face troubled.

'What! I don't believe it â€“ Remus, a werewolf. What are we going to do_?'

'We,' said James, 'are going to do nothing until he comes back. Then we can ask him about it. Don't say anything about this to anyone else, Peter.'

'No, no, of course not. I don't believe this â€“ are you sure? How on earth can one of my friends be a werewolf?'

The next day, the threesome were distracted and made stupid mistakes in the lessons.

'Sirius Black! Will you stop staring out the window like that and listen to what I'm saying! And you, James. Honestly, what's wrong with you lot today?'

Professor Fisher, the Herbology teacher, shook her head at them reproachfully. 'Now. Let me repeat that, for the benefit of those who were growing moss in their ears.' There was a giggle around the class, and she began to explain again about the difficulties of picking Snapping Tulips.

When lessons were finally over, James and Sirius went up to the common room, with Peter following. Most of the other Gryffindors had gone to watch the Quidditch practice, because there was a really important match the next day. But none of them were in the mood for anything save speaking to Remus. Tense and on edge, they sat in their preferred corner of the room and said little to one other.

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Remus left the Infirmary when he began to feel stronger. The transformation always left him physically and mentally drained, and he had spent the day lying in bed recovering. The common room was all but deserted; only his friends sat in their corner. Remus mentally rehearsed his story as he went over, still pale and tired.

'Are you feeling better now?' James struggled to keep his tone normal.

'Yeah, I'm okay.' He collapsed onto a chair opposite Sirius.

Rather shrilly, Peter asked, 'So, was it your mother who was ill this time â€“ or did you have to go and see your aunt â€“ or did you -'

'Shut up, Peter,' said James uncomfortably. Remus looked at him in alarm. Surely, surely they didn't suspect anything? As he hesitated, uncertain what to do, James looked at him with a serious expression.

'Remus, I think we should tell you, we know why you're ill each month.'

Remus felt his skin drain. No, he thought to himself. Please let this not be true. Please let them be wrong. I'll die if they find out. –

'Why?' he asked, his voice little more than a whisper.

'You â€“ you're a werewolf.'

How had they known? Very slowly, he nodded, unable to speak.

Sirius sprang to his feet, his face stormy. 'Why? Why didn't you tell us? Don't you trust us? I can't believe it, one of my best friends, and you've been telling us a pack of lies! How could you lie to us like this? Don't you trust us?' He paced up and down the room.

More calmly, James asked, 'Why didn't you tell us, Remus?'

Remus looked at them aghast and incredulous. He began to speak, his voice trembling.

'Why didn't I tell you? Why do you think I didn't tell you? I knew you'd react like this if you found out, I know all too well how people respond to "what people think of werewolves. Do you think it's been easy for me, knowing that as soon as I told anyone what - what I am, they'd automatically hate me, fear me? Do you think I like pretending I'm not what I am; do you think I like lying to you? And now you know " and you'll do what " what all the others have done " and "and"

His voice broke, and he buried his face in his hands. It was all over. Soon the whole school would know, would hate him, and he'd have to leave. It had been foolish of him even to hope people might be different at Hogwarts. He stumbled from the room.

There was a long, painful silence. Peter and Sirius both looked at James.

'Poor Remus,' he said slowly. 'Poor, poor Remus.'

Peter shifted in his seat. 'I don't know " I mean, d'you want to be friends with a werewolf?'

Sirius whirled around. 'Didn't you hear what he said? Can't you imagine what he's gone through? Of course we're his friends, he's Remus.'

'Surely you understand, Peter, we're not going to stop being his friend like that,' said James.

'Oh " yes,' said Peter, looking as if they were speaking a language he only half understood.

The door to the common room flew open, and Lily came in. 'Hey, you lot. What's the matter with Remus? I met him on the stairs, and he was in an awful state.' She looked at their uneasy faces. 'Have you lot been fighting or something? I tried to talk to him, but he just pushed past me and went up to your dorm.'

James stood up. 'We were just going after him,' he said decisively. Sirius and Peter followed him from the common room, leaving Lily looking puzzled.

Remus was lying face down on his bed, motionless. He made no sign when they entered. Peter looked at James and Sirius uncertainly.

James crossed the room and put a hand on Remus' shoulder.

'Remus?'

He did not move, and tried to keep himself from hoping.

Sirius sat down on the other side of Remus' bed. 'I'm sorry I shouted at you like that, Remus. I was " well, I was a little surprised,

that's all.'

Remus half-turned his head despite himself. Maybe, maybe â€|

'We don't hate you, you know,' said James quietly.

'Will you â€" tell us about it?' Peter perched on the side of the bed and looked at him hopefully.

Slowly, Remus sat up. He drew his sleeve roughly across his red-rimmed eyes, and looked at their earnest faces.

'I don't deserve to have friends like you,' he said softly. Nobody answered that, but James put his arm across Remus' shoulders.

'I was bitten two years ago, when I was nine. You know there is â€| no cure for it. My mum and dad tried everything. I remember the first time â€" I thought I was dying. My parents tried to keep it a secret â€| but they found out in the village â€| I was expelled from the primary school â€| and my friends abandoned me.' He took a few deep breaths before continuing.

'My parents didn't really know what to do with me. And my youngest sister Louisa was ill â€" really ill â€" and they didn't really have much time for me. The only person I could â€| talk to was one of my old teachers, Dr Hatter. He said I should come here â€| he wrote to Professor Dumbledore â€| and so here I am.'

'The teachers know?' asked Sirius.

'Oh, yes. Every month, I go out to a place they arranged for me â€| there's a tunnel under the Whomping Willow that leads to the Shrieking Shack â€| and I go there every full moon. As you have noticed.'

He looked at them hesitantly. 'I've never told anyone this before,' he said, his voice shaking again. 'Will you â€" not let anyone else know? If â€" some people â€" found out, my life would be hell.'

'Of course we won't,' said James at once. 'Don't worry.'

Remus looked at them wonderingly. 'All year, I've lived in fear of â€" of you finding out. And now â€" now, I feel I've been set free. Dr Hatter told me people would be nicer at Hogwarts, but I didn't believe him up till now.'

~

**Epilogue **

'It's almost ready.' Sirius stirred the cauldron carefully, standing in the Shrieking Shack. It was not the full moon, and so they used the place to do work on this project, for there was no chance of anyone else coming across it.

'When it turns clear,' said James, the tension sounding in his voice.

'I know. I can remember from the last time.'

Remus watched. 'You did remember to put the Green-Spotted Salamander skin in?'

'Yes, I did. It was a nightmare trying to get hold of it; they don't sell it in Hogsmeade, and Professor Irwin didn't have any in his cupboard. But when I went up to Diagon Alley I found some in the Alchemist's Apothecary.'

'Any second now!' said James. 'Have you got the bits ready? You remember the words, Peter. Please get it right this time.'

Peter gulped, and nodded.

'Here goes,' said Sirius.

They all watched breathlessly as the mixture turned from a murky green to something as clear as spring water.

'Now!'

Three glasses reached into the cauldron; three hands dropped a piece of hair into their glass; three voices spoke the words in perfect synchrony, and they drank the potion.

Remus watched astonished. They were doing this for him. It had taken almost five years to get it right. First of all they had had to find the instructions for the Animagus Enchantment. As it was closely guarded and only released to bona fide wizards, this had been a task in itself. It had been the end of the second year before they had a complete copy. Then they had to perform it -- find the ingredients, make the potion, practice the words and the proper use of the wand. Peter had had the most difficulty with it, and it had been his blunders that had meant that the last time it had failed.

But nothing had gone wrong yet this time.

'Moony, I think it's worked,' said Sirius, punching the air.

'You won't know until you try it,' said James.

'Well, then, let's!'

'Concentrate,' said James to Peter.

There was a pause, whilst the utmost concentration was written on their faces. Then James fell to the floor. Remus gasped. A second later, Sirius fell. At the same time, where James had been was a tall stag. Then a big black dog appeared beside him. Peter still was concentrating hard. Finally, there was a flicker and a little rat materialised on the floor.

'YES!' shouted Remus. He would truly be alone no longer.

~

I hope you didn't find it confusing -- I've tried to make the story flow, but it is still a bit stilted in places. I should be working on the sequel to 'Moony and Padfoot,' but I've been itching to write this for some time. I think it could do with some improvements, so please review and tell me what you think. Criticism would be very

welcome.

_Oh, and the disclaimer. You know it already. _

_Remus Lupin, Sirius Black, James Potter, and all other characters mentioned belong to J. K. Rowling and her publishers. I am not making any money out of this story, and no infringement of copyright is intended. _

And all my thanks to her for writing such wonderful books!

Blaise

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End
file.